

**Thomas Jefferson to Dabney Carr, January 19, 1816 ,
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Leicester Ford.**

TO DABNEY CARR J. MSS.

Monticello, January 19, 1816.

Dear Sir, —At the date of your letter of December the 1st, I was in Bedford, and since my return, so many letters, accumulated during my absence, have been pressing for answers, that this is the first moment I have been able to attend to the subject of yours. While Mr. Girardin was in this neighborhood writing his continuation of Burke's history, I had suggested to him a proper notice of the establishment of the committee of correspondence here in 1773, and of Mr. Carr, your father, who introduced it. He has doubtless done this, and his work is now in the press. My books, journals of the times, &c., being all gone, I have nothing now but an impaired memory to resort to for the more particular statement you wish. But I give it with the more confidence, as I find that I remember old things better than new. The transaction took place in the session of Assembly of March 1773. Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, Frank Lee, your father and myself, met by agreement, one evening, about the close of the session, at the Raleigh Tavern, to consult on the measures which the circumstances of the times seemed to call for. We agreed, in result, that concert in the operations of the several colonies was indispensable; and that to produce this, some channel of correspondence between them must be opened; that therefore, we would propose to our House the appointment of a committee of correspondence, which should be authorized and instructed to write to the Speakers of the House of Representatives of the several Colonies, recommending the appointment of similar committees on their

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part, who, by a communication of sentiment on the transactions threatening us all, might promote a harmony of action salutary to all. This was the substance, not pretending to remember the words. We proposed the resolution, and your father was agreed on to make the motion. He did it the next day, March the 12th, with great ability, reconciling all to it, not only by the reasonings, but the temper and moderation with which it was developed. It was adopted by a very general vote. Peyton Randolph, some of us who proposed it, and who else I do not remember, were appointed of the committee. We immediately despatched letters by expresses to the Speakers of all the

other Assemblies. I remember that Mr. Carr and myself, returning home together, and conversing on the subject by the way, concurred in the conclusion that that measure must inevitably beget the meeting of a Congress of Deputies from all the colonies, for the purpose of uniting all in the same principles and measures for the maintenance of our rights. My memory cannot deceive me, when I affirm that we did it in consequence of no such proposition from any other colony. No doubt the resolution itself and the journals of the day will show that ours was original, and not merely responsive to one from any other quarter. Yet, I am certain I remember also, that a similar proposition, and nearly cotemporary, was made by Massachusetts, and that our northern messenger passed theirs on the road. This, too, may be settled by recurrence to the records of Massachusetts. The proposition was generally acceded to by the other colonies, and the first effect, as expected, was the meeting of a Congress at New York the ensuing year. The committee of correspondence appointed by Massachusetts, as quoted by you from Marshall, under the date of 1770, must have been for a special purpose, and *functus officio* before the date of 1773, or Massachusetts herself would not then have proposed another. Records should be examined to settle this accurately. I well remember the pleasure expressed in the countenance and conversation of the members generally, on this *debut* of Mr. Carr, and the hopes they conceived as well from the talents as the patriotism it manifested. But he died within two months after, and in him we lost a powerful fellow-laborer. His character was of a high order. A spotless integrity, sound

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judgment, handsome imagination, enriched by education and reading, quick and clear in his conceptions, of correct and ready elocution, impressing every hearer with the sincerity of the heart from which it flowed. His firmness was inflexible in whatever he thought was right; but when no moral principle stood in the way, never had man more of the milk of human kindness, of indulgence, of softness, of pleasantry of conversation and conduct. The number of his friends, and the warmth of their affection were proofs of his worth, and of their estimate of it. To give to those now living, an idea of the affliction produced by his death in the minds of all who knew him, I liken it to that lately felt by themselves on the death of his eldest son, Peter Carr, so like him in all his endowments and moral qualities, and whose recollection can never recur without a deep-drawn sigh from the bosom of any one who knew him. You mention that I showed you an inscription I had proposed for the tomb stone of your father. Did I leave it in your hands to be copied? I ask the question, not that I have any such recollection, but that I find it no longer in the place of its deposit, and think I never took it out but on that occasion. Ever and affectionately yours.